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Dramatic Publishing

From Every Mountainside

By
MAX BUSH



Dramatic Publishing
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(FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE)

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For Alan Levy,
a most insightful and courageous producer

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AUTHOR'S PRODUCTION NOTE:

Examples of the Falun Dafa exercises can be found online on a number of sites. Simply type in “Falun Dafa Exercises” and a number of choices will come up. As for the music—Pudu and Jishi—these also can be found online, or, if you contact practitioners of Falun Gong, they will probably send you copies for free.

There are, of course, many accents—and many languages—in China; it is a large country with diverse peoples. While researching this play, and doing extensive interviews, I spent hours talking with a family from the Fuzhou area of southern China. The two young adults I spoke with most had been in the United States about six years. When I asked them what they spoke in China they said “You may call it Mandarin. But we speak Fuzhou language.” The accents and syntax and word choices of Susan and her sister Jane are modeled after this family and their English.

In the text, Susan's and Jane's accents are suggested but are not always completely written out. This was done because word choice, syntax and accent were not always consistent within the family—or the individuals. If they slowed down, if they wanted to get it “right,” if they took the time to focus on the words carefully, they frequently could speak a word or phrase “correctly.” I've tried to indicate some of those moments in the script. Conversely, at times, when someone in the family was speaking rapidly or joking or trying to communicate passionately—or their attention was divided between conversing and something else—their accent would become stronger and the phrasing more exotic.

In addition, by not completely writing out the accent, the actresses playing the roles are freer to make their own choices of how much accent to place on certain words. For instance the name “Allison” when spoken by Jane or Susan could be Allison

or Arrison or something in between. It also depends upon, as I stated before, what the context is. If they want to get it “right” they could focus on it and sound it out. If they are more relaxed, they may state it more like “Arrison.” It would be the same with words like “police” and “alone.” Another example: when Susan says the word “they.” It could be “they,” or a very soft “th,” almost a soft “n” sound. Again, it depends on choices and the context.

One example of context: Early in the first scene Susan says:

SUSAN. Don't want to smiring all the time. Stupid. Stand and smile—why they want me do that?

Here the context dictates that she focuses on the second “smile” to make a point. An actress could make a strong or subtle distinction between the two words, both could work.

One last note on the language: Frequently the family would leave off the final syllables of words, such as teacher [teacha] United States [Unite State], mother [motha], and government [goveeme]. But again, it depends on the context.

I have seen a number of high school and university actresses approach the accents with trepidation, while in the end, succeeding admirably in terms of acceptability, believability and respect. Once they became familiar with the unusual phrasing and pronunciation they fell into a rhythm and a flow. They were able to use the syntax and phrasing and pronunciation to their benefit in the creation of their character, making their character more compelling.

Lastly, a word about the use of actual company names in the text. A major U.S. law firm performed a legal finding and they stressed that there is nothing in the text that is libelous or actionable. Indeed, all the information mentioned—and a massive amount more—can be found any day on the World Wide Web.

From Every Mountainside was co-commissioned by Coventry High School in Connecticut and Carbondale Community High School in Illinois. The play opened at Coventry on December 1, 2006, with the following cast and crew:

Matt	Lucas Veo
Susan	Alexandra Stebbens
Carol	Jahnna Sieckowski
Doug	Daniel DeMars, Corey Boudreau
Allison	Katherine Brown
Jane	Rachel Kalagher
Karen	Jaykaye Garland
Brandon	Timothy Wicks, Tucker Emerson
Sarah	Natalie Beckwith
Sally	Emily Blanchard
Nan	Bailey Emerson
Scott	Decker Crone
Matt Understudy	Brian Jacobs
Susan Understudy	Chelsea Cote
Jane Understudy	Rose Organek
Director	Alan Levy
Stage Manager	Anna Legassie
Assistant Stage Manager	Catherine Miller
Assistant Director	Alissa Hunt
Properties Manager	Rachel Bouchard
House Manager	Christine Bartley
Light Board Operator	Becca Dagg
Sound Technician	Ilsa Pukinskis
Stage Crew	Paul DeLucia
Costume Crew	Emily Proctor

From Every Mountainside subsequently opened at Carbondale Community High School on September 28, 2007, with the following cast and crew:

Matt Erin Carman-Sweeney
Susan Marina Shay
Carol Suhaila Meera
Doug Kyle Jarvis
Allison Audrey Brittingham
Jane Shuangyi Hou
Karen Margaret Rendleman
Brandon Samuel Jones
Sarah Lilith Reuter-Yuill
Sally Kathleen Oshinski
Nan Isabel Olive
Scott Robby Krajewski

Director Justin Dennis
Stage Manager Cami Benford-Miller
Set and Light Design Jesse Crouch with
Cami Benford-Miller
Technical Director Jesse Crouch, Eric Berrey
Scenic Art Jesse Crouch, Tabor Spinazola
Light Board Operator Megha Patel
Sound Board Operator Scott Nadolski
Stage Hands Nathaniel Huffman, Scott Nadolski,
John Donoghue, Cami Benford-Miller, Tim Harper
Running Crew Nathaniel Huffman, John Donoghue,
Tim Harper

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FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE

CHARACTERS:

SUSAN	half American, half Chinese, 17
JANE	Susan's sister, half American, half Chinese, 19
ALLISON	Susan's first cousin, 19
MATT	18
DOUG	Matt's best friend, 18
CAROL	Doug's girlfriend, 18
KAREN	Matt's former girlfriend, 18
SARAH	friend of Karen, 18
BRANDON	Karen's boyfriend, 18
SALLY	Karen's friend, 18
NAN	singer, songwriter, guitar player, 18-24
SCOTT	young businessman, late 20s

TIME:

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE: A Monday morning and afternoon in early October

SCENE TWO: 7:00 that evening

SCENE THREE: The next day, Tuesday morning and afternoon.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE: The next day, Wednesday morning and afternoon

SCENE TWO: 7:00 that evening

SCENE THREE: The next day, Thursday morning and afternoon.

PLACE: Various places around a Midwest city: Susan's apartment, the courtyard outside Matt and Susan's school, Doug's den and Veterans' Park.

RUNNING TIME: Approximately one hour, forty minutes, with one intermission.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

As the audience enters they see a unit set with a number of suggested locales. Stage right is the courtyard outside the high school cafeteria. This is an area with a bench, landscaping and large pieces of outdoor art. Left suggests SUSAN's apartment and contains a couple of chairs, perhaps a table. Center suggests DOUG's den.

Prior to the opening of the show, while the audience is entering, and stagehands are setting props, MATT enters carrying a sketchpad and an iPod. He sits center, in a corner of the courtyard, puts earphones in and turns on music. We hear the music: Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, Third Movement. He moves in such a way as to let us know that is also what he hears. He then begins to sketch in his pad.

The theater group begins to enter and quietly gathers in their area within the courtyard. First SALLY, then BRANDON.

CAROL and DOUG enter, move to couch in DOUG's den. DOUG carries a laptop computer. CAROL has a teen fashion magazine and reads audibly from it, although we can't understand what she is saying. DOUG does not want to hear what she is reading, as he would

rather play on his laptop. CAROL shuts his computer, DOUG covers his ears, she pulls his hands away, reads.

KAREN, and finally SARAH, enter the courtyard. BRANDON opens his briefcase, takes out calculator and notes and begins to work on something. KAREN takes an earphone from SALLY, listens, they both dance together for a time. Then KAREN sits with BRANDON and reads a book. SALLY continues to listen to music on her iPod. SARAH quietly reads aloud lines from The Crucible to no one in particular, practicing for an audition. We cannot hear what she is reading.

MATT puts down his drawing, begins to rock back and forth intensely focused on the music.

Lights fade on house, then on preset onstage, music fades out as lights come up onstage.

At rise, it is Monday morning. In SUSAN's apartment ALLISON is already dressed for work in a restaurant, wearing a black skirt, black shoes, a white blouse and a black apron with pockets. ALLISON is picking out and putting 3-5 colorful, rhinestone brooches on her blouse. Her hair is up. JANE, who is wearing black pants and black shoes, buttons her white blouse. SUSAN enters, carrying her shoes, getting ready for school.

SUSAN and JANE are sisters, daughters of a Caucasian American father and a Chinese mother. Consequently, their features reflect this heritage, looking neither completely Caucasian nor Chinese. They lived in China until five months ago, when they moved to the United States.

ALLISON, their first cousin on their father's side, is American, white.

DOUG and CAROL are frozen UC in DOUG's den.

SARAH, KAREN, BRANDON and SALLY are frozen right.

MATT is frozen center.

JANE (*buttoning her blouse*). Susan, you talk with Matt?

SUSAN (*putting on shoes*). Not yet.

JANE. How long you wait? We go Friday—four days.

SUSAN. I know.

JANE (*tying on her black apron*). Because I cannot find someone to do this. I work all day. Allison work, too.

ALLISON. Jane, did your father call from Washington?

JANE (*slightly angry*). They are talking and talking but embassy will not help us. Unite State not help; no one help, OK? Everyone afraid or don't care. Right, Susan?

SUSAN. I know.

JANE. Now is time to talk to Matt. We go on Friday.

ALLISON. I'll talk to Matt, Cousin. One of my better talents is talking to young men.

SUSAN. What do I say to this boy?

ALLISON. Just smile at him. He'll get all flustered and confused and interested; then, you just tell him what to do.

JANE (*calmer, smoothing SUSAN's hair*). If you smile, Americans think you are pretty, say very nice, call you sweetie; just smile and he say sonting. Then you talk-a-to him.

SUSAN. Don't want to smirking all the time. Stupid. Stand and smile—why they want me do that?

ALLISON. He's a boy, Cousin.

JANE. You are young and pretty, sweetie.

SUSAN. Matt does not know me. Matt does not see me. In class I stand next-a-to him but he look out window.

ALLISON. Try to get him alone somewhere, stand in front of him, then smile at him and he'll see you. Good luck. (*Writing number on SUSAN's hand.*) If you need any advice, call me at the restaurant. In case you forgot. Bye.

(JANE picks up her purse, ALLISON kisses SUSAN's cheek, then JANE and ALLISON rush out. As SUSAN moves toward MATT, lights come up on him, and we hear the Beethoven. MATT now eats a small ice cream cone, still rocking back and forth to music but not drawing.

SUSAN moves next to him, smiles. He sees her out of the corner of his eye, turns away. SUSAN then moves around behind him until she moves into his line of sight. He looks up at her, she smiles. He acknowledges her, then turns away, focusing on the music. She again moves into his line of sight, he looks up, she smiles.

As he takes off his headphones, lights come up on DOUG and CAROL in DOUG's den. MATT speaks to them, not SUSAN. Music out.

It is now 4:30, later that afternoon. MATT rises. SUSAN is not frozen but holds her position, waiting for MATT to speak to her.)

MATT. So I'm sitting in the courtyard outside the cafeteria during lunch, eating my ice cream cone—one of those small one's—black raspberry with chocolate chunks—when that new Asian girl comes over—

CAROL. Susan?

MATT. Yeah Susan—*that's* her real name—

DOUG. That's her spy name.

CAROL. Her American name.

DOUG. Her Chinese name is probably a block long.

CAROL. Or something really short.

DOUG. Probably: Chaongwanchawannanana.

CAROL. Or: Li.

DOUG. Probably: Dong-chang-bawg-king-dang-kong-li.

CAROL. Or: Po.

MATT. So Susan Chinadoll comes up to me—

DOUG. She doesn't look that Chinese.

CAROL. She looks more white than Chinese

DOUG. Is she faking that, too?

MATT. And she's smiling at me, not saying anything, and I'm thinking— (*to DOUG*) what would you think, Doug?

DOUG. “She wants my ice cream cone.”

(Lights come up on the stage right group. KAREN reads a book; SARAH is painting her hand. BRANDON works his calculator trying to solve a problem and SALLY listens to music with an earphone. SARAH is rather elegantly and attractively dressed in an all-black antique dress and has a pale face and long, black hair.)

MATT (*although he participates in this next scene, something is obviously weighing on him*). Right. But I'm not

going to give it to her so I look over and see the Theater Posse.

DOUG. Which is why you're outside in the first place.

MATT. Which is why I'm outside in the first place.

DOUG. As I so ordered. (*SARAH plays slow, quiet, lyrical space music on her boom box.*) Did you ask them?

MATT. Karen was reading a book.

DOUG (*obviously finds her quite attractive*). Karen...

CAROL. Karen?!

MATT. And Quiz Bowl Boy was sitting next to Karen calculating the secrets of the universe.

DOUG. I don't get that. Why is he a Karen magnet?

CAROL. Brains?

DOUG. Whoever said brains were sexy.

CAROL. I have.

DOUG. If I would have known that was a rule, I would have...no, no I wouldn't.

CAROL. No, you wouldn't.

MATT. The Dead Queen is there—

CAROL. Dancing weirdly while listening to space music.

MATT. No.

DOUG. Reciting Shakespeare to the bushes.

MATT. No, painting (*looking over her shoulder*) ...a portrait on her hand, while listening to space music.

DOUG. Of course.

CAROL. The Dead Queen was painting her hand?

MATT. And who else was with Karen?

DOUG. Sally. The Guard Dog, protecting the herd of 'em.

MATT. Right.

CAROL. Best thing that ever happened to Sally? The invention of mace.

MATT. And this is the group you want me to talk to.

DOUG. We need the inside story on the winter play.

MATT. I don't care about the winter play.

DOUG. You will care about the winter play, when you're back in the land of the living.

MATT. But China keeps torturing me with her smiling. She's waiting for me to look at her.

DOUG. Because she wants your ice cream cone.

MATT (*to KAREN. SARAH turns off boom box*). What are you reading, Karen?

KAREN. Something you wouldn't like or understand, Matt: a book.

BRANDON. Ooo, well said.

MATT. Why do you have to do that to me? What have I ever done to you?

KAREN. Talked to me.

MATT. I took you on your first date, remember?

KAREN. It was unforgettable.

MATT. Your mother loved me.

KAREN. That was my dog. And it was only your leg.

MATT. I read books... (*they all, finally, look at him*) now.

KAREN. What do you think of F. Scott Fitzgerald's new novel?

MATT. Not as good as the last one, but I enjoyed it. Especially the way he handled the exposition.

DOUG. Exposition; that was good.

MATT (*to DOUG*). Learned that in film class.

DOUG. You genius.

MATT (*to DOUG*). I am.

DOUG. You are a genius.

MATT. I am.

CAROL. Um, genius, did you know—

KAREN. That's amazing; considering Fitzgerald hasn't written a new novel in over fifty years. Because he's been dead that long.

BRANDON. Snazzle dazzle. (*SARAH, SALLY and CAROL laugh.*)

DOUG. "Snazzle dazzle." How intelligent is that?

MATT. Hey, Sarah, what's the winter play going to be? Another Shakespeare?

SARAH. Yes; it's called *The Crucible*.

DOUG (*What's that?*). The Wabable?

MATT. One of my favorite Shakespeares.

CAROL. Oh...

SALLY. There's a part that's perfect for you in it.

MATT. See? Sally knows talent when she sees it. Which part?

SALLY. They pile a bunch of rocks on him, and he dies.

DOUG (*moving to MATT*). You could do that. You could make that...romantic.

CAROL. There are other parts for you in that play.

DOUG. We have to audition again. Remember last year? A *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Two young lovers. Ah, we were dazzling. Did we steal the show?

CAROL. You stole the show.

(The group is preparing to leave, gathering their things.)

MATT. Sarah, is there a part for Doug in the play?

SALLY. Remember how considerate of others Matt and Doug were during rehearsals last year?

KAREN. Calling Sarah "The Dead Queen."

SALLY. Throwing backpacks and ice cream at us?

BRANDON. And hiding Sarah's costume during a performance?

DOUG. That was hilarious.

SALLY. Throwing Brandon in the shower with his clothes on.

BRANDON. And holding me there.

DOUG. That really was hilarious!

SARAH (*without animosity; a statement of fact*). There are a lot of parts for guys. But I don't think you'd like to be in this play. It's...intelligent. (*Theater group exits.*)

DOUG. Hey, now we know, we can check *The Crucible* out of the library and read it. (*DOUG moves to go sit down. MATT stands alone in silence.*)

CAROL (*an aside to DOUG, pushing him toward MATT*). The Chinese girl, I think it's why he came over, today. The Chinese girl!

DOUG. So, where's the Chinese girl?

MATT. Oh, she is still there. And when I finally look at her she says:

SUSAN. Ice cream cone.

DOUG. I knew it! Didn't I say that? She wants your ice cream cone!

CAROL. You said that.

DOUG. I said that!

MATT. She said:

SUSAN. Ice cream cone.

CAROL. And you said:

MATT (*to SUSAN*). What a pretty smile.

DOUG. You said that? When you know she wants your ice cream cone?

CAROL. That was nice of you, Matt.

MATT (*to SUSAN*). What a pretty smile.

DOUG. You are a boy. You are an utter boy.

SUSAN. Thank you. You sweetie, too.

DOUG. So you gave her your ice cream cone.

MATT. No, she says:

SUSAN. I stand here with you?

MATT. Sure. (*To DOUG.*) And she had something in her hand.

CAROL (*guessing*). A China doll!

MATT. No.

DOUG. Egg rolls!

MATT. No.

CAROL. The Great Wall!

MATT. What?

DOUG (*beat*). Checkers!

CAROL. Checkers?

DOUG. Chinese...checkers...

MATT. A tennis ball.

DOUG. She wanted to play tennis?

SUSAN. You pray catch?

CAROL. She wanted to pray catch?

SUSAN. You teach me how to throw ball?

DOUG. What is going on here?

MATT. What does she want?

DOUG. Tennis ball, playing catch, maybe that's...how you ask someone...on a date in China.

MATT. She's asking me on a date?

CAROL. She's asking you out!

MATT. That can't be right.

DOUG. Then she's a spy. Using you to get information.

MATT. On what?

DOUG. What do you think?